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# BREEZE HILL NEWS

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The Chinese Fringe Tree, *Chionanthus retusa*, white as a summer cloud

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THE J. HORACE MCFARLAND COMPANY and the MCFARLAND PUBLICITY SERVICE publish BREEZE HILL NEWS to be sent without charge to those who may find it useful and to those who ask for it. The purpose is to acquaint readers with the unique facilities for satisfactory selling of noteworthy plants, trees, seeds, bulbs, and the horticultural service provided by the growing and testing done at Breeze Hill Gardens and the intelligent writing, illustrating, and printing done at the Mount Pleasant Press. Questions asked about plants, pictures, promotion, and printing are cheerfully answered, without obligation to either party. The Mount Pleasant Press in Harrisburg houses both organizations, and visitors to it and to the Breeze Hill Gardens are always welcome. The location of the Press is at Crescent and Mulberry streets (ten minutes from the Pennsylvania Railroad Station), and the mail address is Box 687, Harrisburg, Pa.

## NEW PLANT TROUBLES

THE troubles of which I write are not related to the new plants themselves, but do concern the reluctant and belated commercial handling of them.

Consider any ten modern nursery catalogues. Make an actual or mental combined check-list of the trees and plants they offer. An astonishing and disturbing similarity will be found in the varieties offered. Some variation in prices will be noted, of course, but not much variation in the items for which the prices are set.

Now consider the average home-planting. It also will show close similarity to its neighbors. The Blue Spruce and the Thunberg Barberry may vary in size and in the locations planted, but they go with the *Spiraea vanhouttei*; and the "Peegee" Hydrangea will be among those always present in order to increase the monotony.

What is the reason? Even the male business American biped varies his "duds," his hats, his neckties. The women who keep him on the jump dim the rainbow, shame the peacock, by continually changing hats, dresses, shoes, and stockings—even their hair and their faces are altered in some cases!

Thus the better half of civilized humanity habitually varies its appearance, for which mere men may be and are most devoutly thankful. A woman as standardized as the



*Trillium undulatum* and *Tiarella cordifolia* in Maple Brook

average nursery catalogue or the average home-planting would be something to weep over.

Is it true that "clothes make the man"? Surely they "make" most of him we see in business hours. (Just here I am leaving out the ladies, it may be noticed!)

The "clothes" our home-grounds wear in plant and tree and vine and shrub, in rose and perennial, are just about as "standardized," seemingly, as evening dress for men. Do we really like this plant monotony? Can we help it, avoid it?

*The Country Gentleman* is publishing an article on "Unusual Shrubs," of which I am guilty. Because such articles always produce a demand for the plants described, the Editors want to know to whom they shall direct inquiries for *Chionanthus retusa*, *Neillia sinensis*, and several distinct and attractive new *Deutzias*. I can't tell them, for the nurserymen who might have had these plants since I obtained them ten to fifteen years ago were too busy growing a billion of the commonest shrubs with which to overstock the

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market, to care for new things, to stimulate or supply any demand for novelties. They were, and are, largely concerned with adding to the monotony while decreasing the demand. It is easily apparent to any thoughtful man that an attractive new thing will be added to a planting when there won't be further duplication of monotonous old things.

In Roses the story is otherwise. A half-dozen real Rose merchants, who are rosarians as well as business men, are scouring the world for new Roses, better Roses. Some of them will actually spend money on hybridizing in order to be able later to offer Roses that are truly "made in America." One great wholesale firm has its eyes wide open, and is willing to see and then to grow splendid new Roses brought from Australia or anywhere else. (Incidentally, they are not afraid of new shrubs either.)

But I am compelled, sorrowfully, to admit that the average American nurseryman does not like to be bothered about new things. He is a manufacturer, not a plantsman. Sometimes he is a mighty short-sighted manufacturer, as occurred in the case of one prominent eastern nurseryman who upon seeing a superb specimen of a certain rare Honeysuckle at Breeze Hill, remarked that he did not care to propagate it because it grew too large and he wouldn't be able to sell enough of them! Another nurseryman complained to me, when I had razzed him about the old stuff he grew and the new plants he might have from the Arnold Arboretum, that when he wrote to the Arnold Arboretum asking them to send him a lot of new things, he didn't even get a reply!

The scant attention to the improvement of even the easily grown standard plants bothers me also. Consider one of the familiar spring-flowering shrubs, the Forsythia. How many tradesmen are now offering the vastly superior *F. intermedia* and its even better varieties, *F. spectabilis* and *F. primulina*? They are as easy to grow, much more vigorous, many times more floriferous, a great deal more

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salable than the old *F. viridissima* which these same nurserymen annually stick into the ground in order to have enough material ready for the burn-pile later on.

Look at the Mock Oranges for another horrible example. It is encouraging to note that at last Virginal has broken into the catalogues. But where are Conquête and the wonderful Girandole, the dwarf-growing, and thoroughly charming Belle Etoile, each distinct enough to excite the many visitors who enjoy them at Breeze Hill? Where are a dozen more of Lemoine's distinct Philadelphuses?

So far, no nurseryman has seen the advantage of offering for sale the quartette of these Philadelphuses that delight cultured people in their remarkable and distinct fragrance—Belle Etoile for the perfume of gardenias, *P. subcanus* for the scent of hyacinths, *P. sericanthus rehderianus* for the old "vanilla" odor, *P. purpurascens* for that of the sweet peas. I know nothing which more delights garden visitors than to be introduced to these novel fragrances on an old familiar shrub. They are growing at Breeze Hill, but where can they be bought? What nurseryman offers plants of the dainty *P. microphyllus* which was the parent of Lemoine's best, and the flowers of which have a pineapple odor?

For twenty years *Chionanthus retusa* has been at Breeze Hill, and it has been in magnificent blooming condition for more than ten years. The Department of Agriculture is continually offering young plants. Yet there isn't any stock anywhere, to my knowledge.

*Prinsepia sinensis* is the first thing to get green in the spring. My plant, always admired for foliage and flower, came to me from the Arnold Arboretum in 1913. The nurserymen had the same chance. Who has it for sale?

The blue-leaf Honeysuckle, *Lonicera korolkowi floribunda*, has been a sensation at Breeze Hill for more than ten years. There isn't anything else like it in the world, I think. It is, thank heaven, getting out into commerce now, because the Jackson & Perkins Company, who have both

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vision and energy, are propagating it, and that means distribution. This same live wholesale firm picked up at Breeze Hill the Rose, Scorch, —redder than Paul's Scarlet Climber, and twice as large—which we brought from Australia in 1927.

But why go on? The nurserymen who read these things can adduce plenty more examples if they want to. Some of the younger men in the trade look encouraging to me, because more of them like more plants, and I have an abounding hope that, through them, some of my plant-troubles may soon be mitigated. I just can't feel happy to drive across the country and see painful repetitions of the same small range of stuff and, at the same time, listen to tales of woe from nurserymen who can't sell enough plants to keep them happy because they are continually contributing to this silly monotony.—J. H. McF.



Maple Brook. The large plant in the middle is *Veratrum viride*; *Cypripediums* beyond the pool and *Primula japonica* in the distance

## ROCK GARDENING AT BREEZE HILL

(Continued from previous issues)

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The fifth rock-garden at Breeze Hill takes the form of a little woodland spring. Very early it was denominatated "Maple Brook," by our demon cultivator, Dan, because it lies under the dense shade of a Norway Maple and he has been called upon so many times to fish maple leaves and samaras out of the water, as well as to pull up uncounted numbers of maple seedlings. The spot which it occupies is a rough crescent about ten feet deep and twenty feet along the inner edge. Before the transformation, it was probably the driest and most inhospitable spot in the garden. Directly under the Norway Maple, with a stone-flagged terrace on one side, a stone wall on the other, and the *Arborvitæ* hedge right behind it, all moisture in the ground was continually sucked out by thirsty roots. *Pachysandra terminalis*, *Vinca minor*, and Lilies-of-the-Valley had all perished in a vain attempt to cover it.

Because it was an ugly spot to have at the entrance to the Iris garden, a heroic experiment was tried. We dug a trench four feet wide and about eighteen inches deep along the full length of the stone paving. In this trench was made a concrete trough with sides about ten inches high, reaching within a half inch of the surface of the flagging in front, and slightly lower at the back. Near the center of the back wall of this was affixed a natural bird-bath, which was a hollowed-out stone collected at Eagles Mere a year or two before. The earth which had been taken from the trench was piled up behind it to make a sort of mound rising well up on the stone wall. Near the end of the stone wall a water-pipe was sneaked in and allowed to dribble into an invisible concrete trough which led down the slope to the Eagles Mere rock. This trough was studded with water-worn stones gathered

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here and there, and covered with leaf-mold so that no cement could be seen. Where the water overflowed from the stone into the trough below, a bowl-like arrangement of rough stones was built to form a pool some two feet in diameter. The trough to the left of this was filled with rocks of varying sizes and ordinary garden soil; to the right it was filled with stones, peat, sphagnum moss, and leaf-mold; thus making two tanks of mud, one sweet, one sour. This work was done in the late summer of 1927, and that autumn a large collection of native plants was installed. A tiny Hemlock was set to hang over the outlet from the water-pipe, thus disguising the source of the water-supply. A mat of Wintergreen was laid beneath the Hemlock against the wall. Bulbs of *Lilium superbum* were tucked in below that, and on the sloping bank above the tank quantities of *Cypripedium pubescens* and *Cypripedium parviflorum*, *Dodecatheon meadia*, *Viola pedata*, *Dicentra cucullaria*, *Phlox divaricata*, and *Trillium undulatum* were hopefully planted for spring bloom.



*Phlox divaricata*, Cypripediums, and Dodecatheons along the rill.  
*Stellaria pubera* above the stone at upper left

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Below them, and immediately over the tank, were grouped more Cypripediums, *Carex fraseri*, several kinds of ferns and mosses, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, *Tiarella cordifolia*, *Dalibarda repens*, *Orchis spectabilis*, and one or two other things. Of all these, only the Tiarellas, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Trilliums, Carex, and the ferns have survived two years. The Cypripediums were good in 1929, but do not now seem to like the place. The Orchis never reappeared after we put it into the ground, and the Dalibarda crept silently away. The Lilies have made a half-hearted attempt to grow, and the Winter-green hangs on fairly well. The Dutchman's Breeches finds the place too wet for its fancy, and *Phlox divaricata* evidently prefers some other sort of home. However, the plants which did survive, especially the lush Jack-in-the-Pulpit and the pretty Painted Trilliums, have compensated for the loss of their ungrateful companions.

A curious plant arrived voluntarily and excited much comment in the spring of 1928. It was a slender, wiry thing which ambled over the stones near the beginning of the rill, and soon opened starry flowers nearly a half-inch across, with the five white deeply cleft petals which marked it as a Chickweed—but a glorified sort of Chickweed which none of us had ever seen before. We called in two plant-hounds who spend most of their lives scouring the near-by mountains with lenses and specimen cases, and had them stumped for several weeks. One of them finally identified the plant as *Stellaria pubera*, a fairly rare native, which evidently came in with the rocks gathered from the woods.

The sour section of Maple Brook to the right of the rill and pool was made as acid as possible with leaf-mold, peat, and aluminum sulphate in anticipation of growing acid-loving plants. At the rear, to close up an opening in the hedge, we planted a four-foot specimen of *Taxus canadensis* sent to us by a woods-loving friend of Coudersport, Pa., backed up by a two-foot log well advanced in decay, with a smaller log, beautifully covered with lichens, laid in front

of it. Between the logs were planted Maidenhair and Christmas Ferns, and various other natives sprung up of their own accord. In front of the lichen-covered log, a half-dozen roots of the Twayblade, *Liparis liliifolia*, have established themselves and multiplied in the past three years to a fairly large colony, rising as much as twelve to fifteen inches high, with hyacinth-like spikes of curious purplish brown flowers.

Another interesting solitaire which came in with a sod of Partridge Berry brought from Eagles Mere is *Streptopus roseus*, a curious liliaceous plant with clasping alternate leaves, each bearing a flower which twists around the stalk and hangs beneath the leaf, giving it the common name, Twisted Stalk. The tiny rose-pink flowers are delicately attractive, and the grace of the plant is beyond reproach.

Bloodroots have found a congenial home high up in this section, and *Clintonia borealis* seems well established close to a rather interesting plant of *Daphne mezereum*. A Forget-me-not, which had been growing in the neighborhood long before this moist spot was created, traveled into it with great speed, soon taking possession to the exclusion of almost all else. This we could not tolerate, so the *Myosotis* was removed to another swamp later prepared for it.



*Primula japonica* flourishing in the mud

In the extreme right end of the tank were planted *Primula japonica*, and, as a sort of experiment, two plants were set in the ground well outside of the tank to see what would happen. Those within the tank have grown enormously, reaching two to two and a half feet, with tier after tier of sparkling flowers. The two plants within twelve inches of them, but in the drier ground outside the tank, are less than half that size. Thus the prescription for *Primula japonica* seems to be mud and shade, Q. E. D.

In this same section, *Cypripedium pubescens* and *Cypripedium parviflorum* thrive in the higher ground. In the wetter places, they have passed out. Three clumps of *Cypripedium reginae* have lived two years but did not bloom the past season, probably because there is something wrong with the soil. We have tried to establish the Venus Flytrap and the common purple Pitcher Plant; *Pogonia ophioglossoides* blooms only sparingly. But one of the most interesting things in the really wet places is a colony of *Calla palustris*, which sends out curious snake-like runners, causing the plants to jump about from one place to another in a most astonishing fashion. All its runners head away from the water toward drier ground! Last year, as an experiment, a few plants of the Godfrey Dwarf Calla were squeezed in among them and are growing well, but did not bloom in this location, as they did in another bog.

The greatest difficulty in connection with this garden has been the depredations of robins and catbirds, which persist in digging up the wet soil and moss, to use in building their nests, or for some other undisclosed reason. The bed in the immediate foreground is covered with a sort of sheet moss which we found growing in the far end of the orchard, and which rather likes the wet shade. But after the men have left the garden in the evening, the birds descend and tear it to shreds, digging out quantities of the mud beneath and carrying it away. They have filled up the rill innumerable times, destroying many small plants by their scratching. It

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has become so bad that we covered the moss in front with burlap bags, held down with wire stakes, for a few weeks in order to try to save the moss until their fury was abated. There is nothing, apparently, that we can do to save the rill from being clogged with the dirt which they scoop into it.

Our greatest difficulty in the way of plants has been to secure autumn flowers. A few *Gentiana septemfida* promise something in that way, but, so far, the Cardinal Flower has eluded us. The space is not large and can easily be over-crowded. We presume that we shall have to resign ourselves to a spring display only, since most of the vernal flowers refuse to be disturbed, and we cannot insert many fall-blooming things without interfering badly with them.

On the whole, Maple Brook has been one of the most successful of the recent adventures at Breeze Hill. It attracts the attention of almost everybody who comes into the garden, and interests the real flower-lovers more than anything else, possibly, except the Roses.

{ *Accounts of the other Rock-Garden Adventures will appear in subsequent issues of BREEZE HILL NEWS* }



*Gentiana septemfida* and an encrusted Saxifraga